

Education and training in the EU: where do we stand?

The EU is working with Member States to make education systems fit to give all young Europeans the best start in life. The 2018 edition of the Education and Training Monitor shows Member States have made further progress in meeting targets set for 2020. However, achieving quality and inclusive education for all – a key goal of the European Pillar of Social Rights – remains a major challenge.

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Education has an important role to play in sharing and teaching civic rights and obligations. It is key in promoting social inclusion and learning about European integration. Member States do this in a wide variety of ways. By exploring examples, the Monitor provides a snapshot of their efforts and will enable them to refine their efforts, also by learning from others.

- In **Denmark**, students participate in community activities beyond the regular curriculum. Critical thinking is an explicit learning objective. Both educational programmes and school culture aim to prepare pupils for participation, respecting rights and taking responsibility in a free and democratic society.
- After the terrorist attacks in 2015, the **French** action plan for the ‘Great mobilisation of schools for the values of the Republic’ led to a stronger focus on moral and civic values and critical thinking.
- In **Slovenia**, elements of participatory governance have been a part of education for decades – students are part of discussions on school regulations and quality of teaching. Every year they debate a selected topic in their class and in regional and national school parliaments.
- In **Sweden**, children work on student councils where they can both acquire knowledge of how a democratic society functions and have their views heard.
- **Bulgaria** set up student councils in 2016, including in primary schools; and student representatives participate, without voting rights, in school boards.

Moving closer to the targets

Member States have made further progress towards the headline targets they set themselves for 2020. However, the EU averages hide differences between and within Member States. More effort is needed to keep modernising and improving education systems, notably on basic skills, where the EU is actually moving away from its objectives.



The Education and Training Monitor is the Commission's flagship publication that analyses how national education and training systems in the EU are evolving. It has been crucial in driving education reform by fostering dialogue with and between Member States, and highlighting promising policy initiatives as well as measures that have delivered results on the ground.

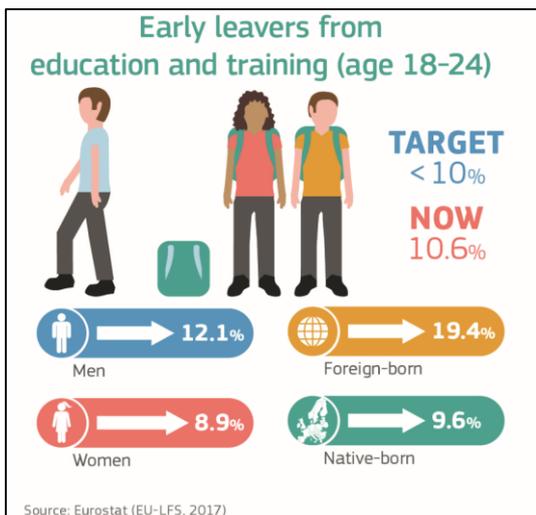
Each year, the Monitor records Member States' progress towards the Europe 2020 headline targets:

1. to reduce the share of early school leavers to below 10%
2. to reach 40% tertiary educational attainment among 30 to 34-year-olds
3. to reach 95% participation in early childhood education and care
4. to reduce underachievement in reading, maths and science below 15%
5. to reach an employment rate of recent graduates of 82%
6. to reach 15% adult participation in learning.

The Monitor has a specific theme each year – in view of the upcoming European Parliament elections, the theme chosen for 2018 was citizenship education.

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Education and Training Monitor 2018



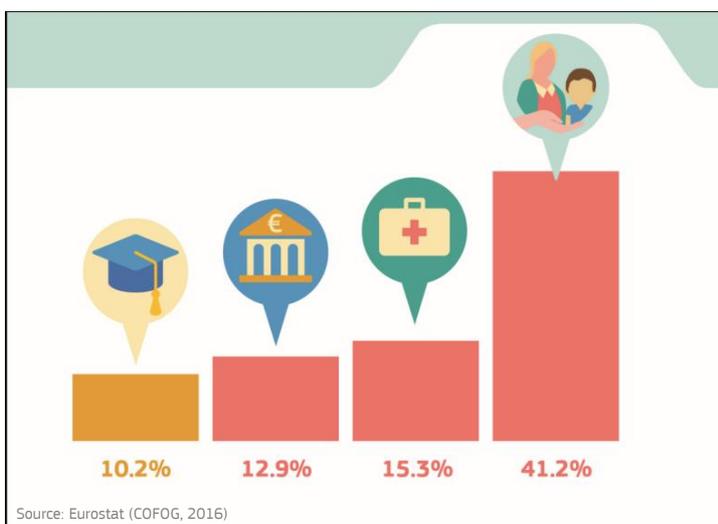
Fewer pupils drop out of school...

The EU average share of early school leavers has been decreasing steadily since 2010, when it stood at 13.9%. The share of pupils dropping out of school without a diploma decreased to 10.6% in 2017, very close to the objective of less than 10% by 2020. Eighteen countries have already reached the benchmark (Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Ireland, Lithuania, Greece, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Cyprus, Denmark, Belgium, France and Slovakia), Germany (10.1%), the UK (10.6%) and Estonia (10.8%) are very close to reaching it.

...while more complete a degree

The EU has seen a continuing expansion of higher education over the last two decades. The percentage of those completing tertiary education has risen to 39.9%, very close to the 40% target.

In most EU Member States, tertiary educational attainment grew in comparison to 2014 and 2011. The exceptions were Croatia, Hungary, and, to a lesser extent, Spain and Finland, where the proportion of the population with a tertiary qualification decreased between 2014 and 2017 — even if the two latter countries both have rates above the EU target of 40%. By contrast, in the same period there was remarkable growth (higher than 6 percentage points) in the Czech Republic, Greece and Slovakia. However, neither the Czech Republic nor Slovakia has met the 40% target yet.



Investing in quality education

Investment in education has increased further at EU level – in 2016, it rose by 0.5% in real terms compared to the previous year. Spending rose in particular in Romania, Ireland and Sweden. Thirteen Member States spent less on education in 2016: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Greece, Denmark and Italy (from the largest to smallest reduction in spending). This trend can be partly explained by the completion of important EU-funded projects in 2015, such as schools and research infrastructure in universities.

Education remains the fourth largest government expenditure item (10.2%) after social protection (41.2%), health (15.3%) and general public services (12.9%).